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NIGERIA'S REGIONAL AMBITIONS: CHANNELS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract: *Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world, member of the UN Security Council and largest economy of Africa. In addition to its globally acknowledged qualitative oil, it also has large deposits of mineral resources including tin, coal and gypsum, gold and lead. The country is not only engaged in a passionate competition with South Africa to attain the position of a continental superpower preparatory towards becoming a globally acknowledge giant but also comfortably playing a big-brother role among Africa nations. This paper uses documentary analysis to examine Nigeria's social, economic and global potentials of fulfilling its dreams vis-a-vis the potentials of its competitor(s). The paper found out that Nigeria faces multidimensional challenges on its path towards continental leadership ranging from domestic problems of rising crime, incessant insurgency, dilapidated infrastructure, growing unemployment, over-reliance on dwindling oil income and leadership crises among others to intense competition from other strong African countries like South Africa, Egypt and Ethiopia. The paper concludes that the country's goal of a regional superpower status is achievable but Nigeria must address its domestic challenges to win the race of attaining continental hegemony.*

Keywords: *Superpower; Economy; Military; Boko Haram Insurgency; Hegemony*

INTRODUCTION

Home to one-fourth of Africans covering a land area of about 1600 square kilometers, with vast human and material resources within its geographic confines, Nigeria prides itself as the giant of Africa (Sotiriou 2015). However, questions are being raised on whether Nigeria's domestic problems are not strong impediments capable of not only halting the country's growth but also retarding its achievements towards greatness especially in the face of stern competition from other strong economies that faces little or none of the Nigeria's problems of insurgency, secessionist movements, chronic corruption and leadership crises (BBC 2014). This debate prevails on radio, on TV, online and on the street of not only Nigeria but many African countries. It demands answers to whether South Africa's membership of BRICS, its western European connections and its vast and well positioned mining industry can tilt the competition to the advantage of the former apartheid infested country. Though other competitors of continental greatness – Ethiopia and Egypt – have their areas of strength, this paper dwells more on the two frontrunners regardless of Ethiopia's successes in agricultural diversification and processing and its globally famous airline that contributes a staggering \$2 billion per year (World Bank 2014) and Egypt's longstanding tourist strides in Pyramids and culture as the cradle of civilization and its continental military superiority (Mikva 2015). Noteworthy is the fact that regardless of this paper's snubbing of great strength in these capable countries, they significantly play a key role in determining the Africa's continental superpower in the areas of partnership, treaties, bandwagoning and other diplomatic and military alliances. Hence the paper will assess among others, avenues for cooperation especially in peace missions across the continent to reveal the most deserving of Africa's leadership at the global scene.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The term superpower refers to a strong state that exerts influence over, and capable of dominating others in international relations especially through use or threat of its military, economic and cultural superiority. The term is defined as "a country that has the capacity to project dominating power and influence anywhere in the world, and sometimes, in more than one region of the globe at a time, and so may plausibly attain the status of global hegemony" (Miller Lyman 2015). Going by this explanation of Miller, it amounts to naught, any attempt at assuming the status of sub-regional, regional or continental superpower because a superpower must possess the capacity to go beyond its immediate environment and control the world. Samuel Huntington in his classic writing titled the lonely superpower agrees with Miller and opines that "the superpower could effectively resolve important international issues alone, and no combination of other states would have the power to prevent it from doing so."

These are qualities that neither Nigeria nor South Africa possess and may not possess in foreseeable future. Even, United States is increasingly becoming unable to control the world and solve crucial international issues alone without the cooperation of others states. The use of military force becomes impossible or at least ineffective without willing and capable allies to reduce excessive burden and distribute damages and casualties among supportive nations, and legitimation of the United Nations to give war a beautiful and acceptable cause in order to avoid condemnation and gain popular support both at home and abroad. Thus, (Huntington 1999) and (Haines 2015), concludes that the contemporary world lacks a unipolar superpower but has a *uni-multipolar* system where a strong superpower exist and several other major powers that aid the actions of the *unipower* through an interwoven and interdependent power relationship. This latter position leaves the possibility of becoming a superpower more open and impliedly admits the possibility of Nigeria becoming one of the major powers with strength that surpasses all other African nations and capable of exerting influence over all others while at the same time not disregarding the possibility of becoming a global superpower in future.

Hence, a nation must possess certain resources of power capable of catapulting itself to a position of power that others must accept willingly or unwillingly. Such resources and determinants of international prowess are subject to intellectual polemics but some features such as population, geographical advantage, strong economy, resources, military prowess, diplomacy and dominant culture are undeniably essential (Kennedy 1987). The higher the population of a country the better its chances of enriching its military personnel to stand the test of other great powers especially when it comes to land battles. Population also makes a country a center of attraction for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) due to its ability to absorb end products, accommodate wider and stronger competition and provide large market more than countries with smaller population. A large landmass negates the possibility of quick annihilation by a strong power and to some extent gives the nation a possibility of retaliatory strike unlike smaller nations than can be exterminated from the face of earth within hours of first strike. The stronger the economy of a state the higher its capacity to support large populations and sponsor large military and diplomatic engagements within and outside the country; hence, a nation with a weak economy, incapable of supporting other aspects of state may find its population and large expanse of land as mere liabilities than assets. Large military personnel and dexterity serves as physical resources of international power that threatens real and perceived adversaries, gives protection against territorial aggression and makes a nation a worthy partner with other major powers across the globe in their drives towards attaining mutually super-ordinate advantages or solving common problems through the use of coercion. A robust diplomatic ability prevents sanctions, secure new and maintains old friendships; and lead nations to solve problems and achieve symbiotic goals using words instead of bullets while a dominant culture especially in the fields of music, dress, films and

thoughts makes a nation to possess a model-like aura worthy of emulation by less capable nations. Agreeing significantly with (Kennedy Nossal 1999) states”

[G]enerally this term was used to signify a political community that occupied a continental-sized landmass, had a sizable population (relative at least to other major powers); a super-ordinate economic capacity, including ample indigenous supplies of food and natural resources; enjoyed a high degree of non-dependence on international intercourse; and, most importantly, had a well-developed nuclear capacity.

This statement not only agrees with Paul Kennedy’s claims but also brings to light another requisite feature of a superpower, which others failed to recognize. The issue of self-reliance especially for the supply of basic needs to the nation’s population is essential to the attainment of a superpower status. Though, no nation can survive as an island unto itself, too much reliance on others for food, shelter, fuel and simple tools reveals the weak spots of a nation on which competitors and adversaries can easily manipulate through the use of sanctions, trade boycotts, unfair tariffs, and creation of Free Trade Zones (FTZ).

EXAMINING NIGERIAN ECONOMIC STRENGTH

Previously, Nigeria was seen as a mono-centric economy that relies essentially if not wholly on the mercy of rising oil prices and fails to develop other aspects of the economy such as agriculture, solid minerals, manufacturing and service industries making it persistently listed among the single export nations of the world. In recent times however, Nigeria is fast releasing itself from the cocoon of over reliance on oil exposing a new, not previously conceived size, structure, and strength in almost all sectors of the economy. Formerly, the oil sector contributes as much as 85% of Nigeria’s Gross Domestic Product but with the current rebasing, Oil and gas, agriculture and trade contributes only half (54%) of Nigeria’s GDP with oil having a share of 15.8% less than agriculture (22.1%) and trade has 16.5% (World Bank 2014). Masetti (2014) explains this rapid expansion and diversification as an outcome of rebasing Nigeria’s GDP from 1990 to 2010 as the new base year. This rebasing increases the industries being measured from 33 to 46 with the service sector having a share of more than 50% and enabled the country to attach value to some industries like mobile film industry, communication and internet services that were hitherto either non-existent or contributed little to the economy back in 1990. The IMF recommends changing the base year every five years to capture changing realities but Nigerian statisticians left the base year unchanged for many years resulting in providing inaccurate figures to the world as the country’s GDP.

Table 1: Sectoral Shares in Nigeria's GDP, 2012: A Comparison of Newly Re-Based & Older GDP Estimates
(Source: NBS cited in Word Bank, Nigerian Economic Report, 2014)

	NEW	OLD
Agriculture	22.1	33.1
Crude Oil & Gas	15.8	37
Trade	16.5	15.5
Manufacturing	7.4	1.9
Food & Tobacco	4.4	-
Construction	3.1	1.3
Transportation	1.3	1.6
Telecommunications	8.3	0.8
Electricity & Gas	0.5	0.2
Finance & Insurance	2.8	1.6
Real Estate	7.7	4.5
Entertainment, Broadcasting, Motion Pictures & Music	2.0	-
Public Administration	3.1	-
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	3.7	-
Others	5.7	2.5

Table 2: GDP Growth in Selected Sectors 2011 – 2013 (New Estimates) – A Comparison of Newly Re-Based & Older GDP Estimates (Source: NBS cited in Word Bank, Nigerian Economic Report, 2014)

	2011	2012	2013
Total	5.3	4.2	5.5
Non-Oil GDP	5.8	5.8	8.4
Agriculture	2.9	6.7	2.9
Crude Oil & Gas	2.3	-4.9	-13.1
Manufacturing	17.8	13.5	21.8
Including Foods, Beverages & Tobacco	7.3	6.6	11.8
Electricity, Gas & Utilities	39.5	14.6	14.6
Construction	15.7	9.4	14.2
Trade	7.2	2.2	6.6
Transportation	6.0	-3.4	3.8
Telecommunications & Info Services	1.2	3.7	4.7
Entertainment, Broadcasting, Movies & Music	10.5	1.9	24.1
Real Estate	0.4	5.6	12.0

'The Economist' (2014) explains this gargantuan change of figures that:

To come up with an estimate of GDP, statisticians need to add together estimates of output from a sample of businesses in every part of the economy, from farming to service industries. The weight they give to each sector depends on its importance to the economy in the base year. A snapshot of Nigeria's economy in 1990 gave little or no weight to fast-growing parts of the economy such as mobile telephony or the movie industry. At the time the state-owned telephone company had a few hundred thousand customers. Today the country has 120m mobile-phone subscriptions. On the old 1990 figures, the telecoms sector was less than 1% of GDP; it is now almost 9% of GDP. Motion pictures had not shown up at all in the old figures, but the industry's size is now put at 1.4% of GDP. The old GDP figures were based on an estimate of output. The new figures are cross-checked against separate surveys of spending and income. The sample on which the data are based has increased from around 85,000 establishments to 850,000.

This paper must quickly clarify that the rebasing is not the cause of economic progress but rather reveals the true picture of the Nigerian economy which have been inaccurately reported over the years. The post rebasing figures show glaringly good performances from manufacturing, service, agriculture and oil industries, a large deposit of gas and an attractive mining hub, Nigeria proves itself a real giant with diversifying economy capable of greater achievements. With a population of about 140 million people (NPC 2006) most of which falls within working age of 15 – 50 (World Bank 2014), the country has the requisite labor force to catapult itself to the orbit of world leaders.

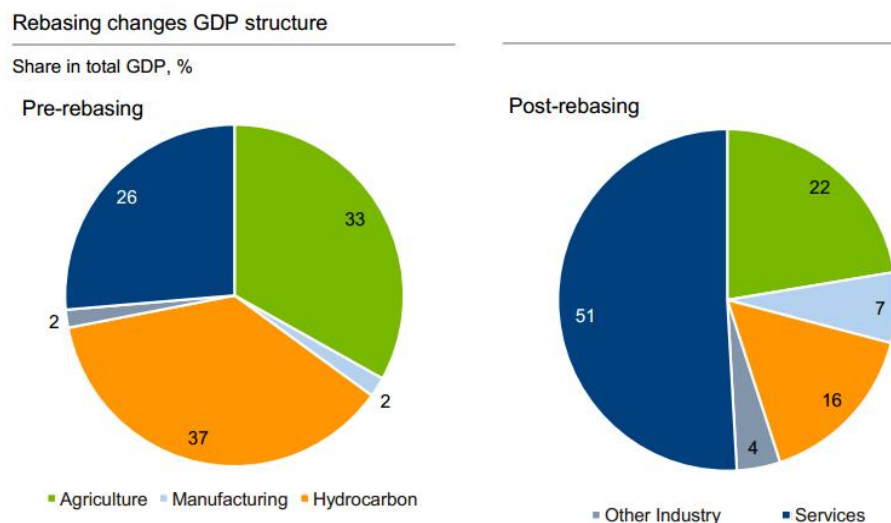


Figure 1: Rebasing changes GDP structure (Source: NBS, in Masetti 2014)

The rebasing makes Nigeria's economic strength far better than its closest rival South Africa which has a total GDP of USD382.3bn compared to Nigeria's USD 451.7bn and with 127.6 million active mobile lines it is the largest mobile market in Africa and one of the 10 largest markets in the world with its economy still having rooms for greater investment. Thus, since 2012, it surpasses South Africa to become the largest recipient of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and portfolio inflows (Masetti 2014). This explains to a large extent, the tremendous growth of the service industry, manufacturing sector and other non-oil segments of the economy that were hitherto insignificant contributors to the economy. With new seemingly serious political leadership in place and relative peace due to the successes in the fights against insurgency, Nigeria stands a chance of improving its economy even further.

NIGERIA'S MILITARY STRENGTH: A FORCE OR A FAILING

Though Nigeria's military is rated fourth in Africa (after Egypt, Algeria and South Africa) its experience in peace missions especially in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola and Darfur; as well as dealing with internal strives and insurgency such as Boko Haram helped to give it the essential practical proficiency that others lack (Mikva 2015). Nigeria's large population supports its military drives with 3,455,147 youths reaching military age annually, 130,000 active frontline personnel, 32,000 active reserve personnel and a total of 72,319,838 available manpower. This feat is attained due to sheer size of Nigeria's population and remains unattainable for any African country.

Table 3: A comparison of Nigerian and South African Military Strength (Source: Global Firepower Index, 2015)

	NIGERIA	SOUTH AFRICA
POWER INDEX SCORE (Inverse)	1.1602	0.9233
Total Population	177,155,754	48,375,645
Available Manpower	72,319,838	25,913,422
Fit for Service	40,707,659	14,093,327
Reaching Military Age Annually	3,455,147	964,139
Active Frontline Personnel	130,000	88,565
Active Reserve Personnel	32,000	17,100
LAND SYSTEMS		
Tanks	148	195
Armored Fighting Vehicles	1,420	2265
Self-Propelled Guns	25	43
Towed Artillery	339	97
Multiple Launch Rocket Systems	30	50
AIR POWER		
Total aircraft	98	209
Fighters/Interceptors	10	17

Fixed Wing Attack Aircraft	10	17
Transport Aircraft	42	106
Trainer Aircraft	35	67
Helicopters	38	96
Attack Helicopters	9	12
NAVAL POWER		
Total Naval Strength	75	30
Aircraft Carriers	0	0
Frigates	2	4
Destroyers	0	0
Corvettes	0	0
Submarines	0	3
Coastal Defense Craft	12	9
Mine Warfare	3	4
OIL RESOURCES		
Oil production	2,525,000bbl/day	192,000 bbl/day
Oil consumption	280,000 bbl/day	591,000 bbl/day
Proven Oil Reserves	37,200,000,000 bbl/day	15,000,000 bbl/day
LOGISTICS		
Labor Force	51,530,000	18,540,000
Merchant Marine Strength	89	3
Major Ports & Terminals	3	5
Roadway Coverage	193,2000	362,099
Railway Coverage	3,505	20,192
Serviceable Airports	54	566
FINANCIAL AID (in USD)		
Defense Budget	\$2,330,000,000	\$4,610,000,000
External Debt	\$15,730,000,000	\$139,000,000,000
Reserves of Foreign Exchange & Gold	\$47,700,000,000	\$48,460,000,000
Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)	\$478,500,000,000	\$595,700,000,000
GEOGRAPHY		
Square Land Area	923,768 km	1,219,090 km
Coastline	853 km	2,798 km
Shared Border	4,477 km	5,244 km
Waterways	8,600 km	0 km

Based on the figures in table 3, Nigeria excels in manpower and resources (especially petroleum) while South Africa is far better in terms of Air Force and naval equipment as well as better military logistics and preparedness. This gives South Africa a better hand in military hardware and explains its power-index of 0.9233 which ranks it 32nd out of 106 rated countries against Nigeria's 1.1602 that places it 41 out of 106. The GFP ranking is an inverse rating with 0.0000 as a perfect score (lower numbers indicate higher military strength), which is used to consider over fifty factors and rank countries, based on their ability to wage

conventional war (Mikva 2015; GFP 2015). Despite Nigeria's weaker military strength, its contributions to peace missions in Africa and the world are unsurpassed by any African country. It started contributing to peace mission right after independence in 1960 and remains a key contributor since then. Nigeria actively participated in peacekeeping missions in Congo, Namibia, Angola, Western Sahara, Mozambique, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan and South Sudan. Nigeria's near-unilateral missions in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Cote d' Ivoire where it provided military equipment and personnel costs, increases its fame in light of needs to keep global peace. Adeniyi (2015) posits:

As the preponderant power in West Africa, Nigeria has been the main provider of military and other resources for ECOWAS peace operations to the tune of US\$8 billion in its various missions in Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, and Sierra Leone. During the peak of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars in the 1990s, Nigeria provided over 70% of ECOMOG's military and civilian personnel, as well as logistical support. In 2003, it deployed 1,500 troops to the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL), and a medical and signals team to the ECOWAS Mission in Cote d'Ivoire in 2003 (ECOMICI). In 2004, 1,500 Nigerian troops were deployed in Darfur as part of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Recently, Nigeria also provided 1,200 troops to the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), and 200 police officers to AMISOM. Nigeria deployed the first set of individual police officers (IPOs) in Africa in ONUC in 1960 while the pioneer Formed Police Unit (FPU) of 120 officers was deployed in Liberia in 2004.

South Africa started contributing to International missions through the South African Development Community (SADC) to Lesotho in 1998 and made its debut as a contributor to UN peace missions in 1999 in Congo, which was 39 years after Nigeria's first mission in Congo. As at September, 2015, South Africa participated in 14 UN missions compared to Nigeria's 25 outings. In addition, Many Nigerians held key civilian and military positions in UN peace missions such as Prof. Ibrahim Gambari who served as a UN representative and Head of Mission in Dafur, Mr. Olu Adeniji also serve similar role in Sierra Leone and Central Africa, Major General J.A. Ironsi led the UN mission in Congo as a force commander, a position that was held by five other Nigerians after him including Major General Chris Garuba, Lieutenant General Isaac Obiakor, Major General Moses Obi, Major General Joseph Owonibi and General Martin Luther Agwai in Angola, Liberia, South Sudan, Liberia and Dafur respectively; Thus, with more than 12000 personnel deployed to various peace missions, Nigeria is placed fifth in the world in terms contributing men to keep global peace(Babalola 2014; Lotze 2015; Adeniyi 2015). In recognition of these contributions towards a more stable and peaceful world, Nigeria was re-elected in February, 2014 to continue serving as chair of the UN Peacekeeping Operations Panel (Babalola 2014).

This is clear pointer to the roles Nigeria play in stabilizing the continent and clear will to carry the lot and spend in the interest of peace, restoration of order and progress.

NIGERIA AND THE AFRICAN UNION

Nigeria's commitment to the African Unity is anchored around its cardinal foreign policy goals of maintaining good, development oriented relationship with immediate neighbors, African countries and the world at large as presented shortly after independence to the United Nations General Assembly on October 7, 1960 by the country's first Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and enshrined in the nation's constitution of 1999 (Ashiru & George 2013). This policy thrust ensured the maintenance peaceful relations with all African nations regardless of size, population, economic wherewithal or influence.

This situation was further enhanced by Nigeria's role in balancing the ideological conflict that ensued shortly after independence of most African states concerning the direction of pan-Africanism. On one extreme lies the Casablanca group consisting of countries like Ghana, United Arab Africa Republic, Morocco and Algeria who believe that Africa should delink from all forms of relationship with former colonial masters and establish a united African state to further the interest of Africa while at the other extreme was the Brazzaville group which consisted mainly of all former French colonies that advocated for continued influence of the former colonialists. A proposition viewed by Casablanca group as too subservient and will end up ensuring continued economic exploitation of Africa by the Europeans. Nigeria spearheaded the moderate Monrovia group consisting of Ethiopia, Libya, Liberia, Somalia, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Senegal that proposed gradual but continues approach to political and economic cooperation of African states that will ensure balanced relationship of African states with other countries of the world based on mutual respect and equality by ending all forms of colonialism and adhering to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. (Gusau 2013, 177). Nigeria's belief in total eradication of racism and apartheid led to its huge financial commitment towards the eradication of the unholy scourge of apartheid, which led to its honorary member of the frontline states and Chairmanship of the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid. Thus when it came to the transformation of the Organization of African Unity to the EU-modeled African Union, Nigeria's contribution is best captured by Ashiru & George (2013):

Furthermore, it was Nigeria that provided the leadership that enabled Africa to see clearly the way forward in establishing the African Union. The powerful and sovereign supra-national entity, which Libya proposed and tried to promote, subsequently became tempered and was replaced by the gradualist approach of a European Union model to continental organization, favored by Nigeria and a majority of member states. A Nigerian, Professor Adele Jinadu, was one of six experts that produced the Draft Constitutive Act of the African Union.

MANAGING DOMESTIC CHALLENGES

Corruption is no doubt the greatest Nigerian enigma; it is a cancerous conundrum that has eaten deep into every cranny of the Nigerian state and a reason for the country's low level of respect in the International community. It has grown to a level that corruption seemed to have received quasi-official recognition and permeated the police, anti-corruption agencies, education, health service delivery and the presidency. In the year 2014, when President Goodluck Jonathan was asked on a national television broadcast on allegations that he isn't serious in his fight against corruption, he retorted ""Over 70% of what are called corruption, even by EFCC and other anti-corruption agencies is not corruption, but common stealing." This stand openly contradicts the provisions of the Corrupt Practices and other related Offences act of 2000 that describes corruption to include "bribery, theft, embezzlement of public funds, undue gratifications, fraud and "other related offences" (Balogun 2014). This statement and its kinds serve as encouragement to corrupt officials and a serious impediment on against the anti-corruption crusade. With regards to the police pension scam, the Editorial of Punch Newspaper averred:

For a country notorious worldwide for condoning corruption, very few incidents have offered as much insight into the endemic and pervasive nature of corruption in public office as the Maina case...Many even believed the government was tacitly providing him a hedge against arrest and investigation...at [the] time when Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Abubakar, who was ordered to produce Maina at the Senate, said he was nowhere to be found, the PRTT boss was said to be cruising around town in bulletproof cars, under heavy police protection.

However, with the ascension of President Muhammad Buhari to the presidency on 29th May 2015, the tripods upon which his administration's policies are anchored are Anti-Corruption, Security and the Economy. This resulted in a vigorous, intensive and extensive war against graft that resulted in the retrieval of 3.95 trillion naira and the restoration of Nigeria's long lost glory as a country of hope and opportunity for all. Some of the achievements of his anti-corruption crusade as reported by Premium times (2016) include but not limited to:

- Right from the moment he won the Presidential Election in 2015, the impression of the President as a "no nonsense and incorruptible leader" sent a signal to looters of public funds, with many of them returning funds that had been stolen under the previous administration.
- To create a framework for prosecuting the war against corruption and institutionalize probity, President Buhari set up an Advisory Committee on War Against Corruption

under the leadership of eminent Prof. Itse Sagay to tighten the loose legal provisions through which corrupt persons escape prosecution.

- The anti-corruption battle is gaining ground with several high profile cases already in the courts. The administration is being guided by the rule of law in the prosecution of corruption cases.
- President Buhari enlisted the support of multilateral institutions like the World Bank and IMF, security agencies, Western countries and other friendly nations to locate and repatriate a stolen asset which has already started yielding fruits.
- At a London summit on anti-corruption, President Buhari announced that Nigeria will begin the full implementation of the principles of the OPEN contracting data standards.
- In the first quarter of 2016, President Buhari embarked on trips to the Middle East to sensitize the governments on the need to repatriate stolen assets and hand over the looters for trial in Nigeria. In January, Nigeria and UAE signed Judicial Agreements on Extradition, Transfer of Sentenced Persons, Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters.
- In March 2016, the Federal Government and the Swiss Government signed a Letter of Intent On the Restitution of Illegally-Acquired Assets forfeited in Switzerland. Under the agreement, Switzerland will repatriate \$ 321 million USD illicitly acquired by the Gen. SaniAbacha family.
- In March 2016, the Presidential Committee set up to probe contracts awarded by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) from 2011 to 2015 announced the recovery of over N7 billion from indicted companies and individuals.

These and many other feats attained, have rekindled hope in Nigerians that the nation can attain the peak of its potentials and compete favorably with another nations of the world.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Now more than ever, Nigeria is having bundles of problems to contend with. It faces the challenges of Boko Haram insurgency which to a larger extent has not only crippled the economy of most societies in the Northeastern and north-western regions of the country but also made government to spend almost all government resources on security of lives and property to the detriment of other sectors of the society. This resulted in closure of schools, burning of markets, sporadic killings in cities, extermination of villages and closure of international borders; affected international businesses, stalled agricultural activities and increased destitution (Cheri 2014). Closely related is the recent uprising in the Southeastern part of the country where several secessionist movements for the creation of the Biafra as a sovereign state out of Nigeria is looming high and attracting international attention (Ikhioya


2015). Decades of leadership crises catapulted Nigeria to a position of international disrespect by portraying Nigeria a corrupt nation where electoral malpractice, cyber-crime, fraud, drug trafficking and embezzlement of public funds are the norms rather than exceptions. The green passport became an insignia of trouble in the eyes of international community that earns its bearer the misfortune of serious frisking and interrogations due mainly to soaring level of impunity, money laundering and drugs and human trafficking.

Despite its large, arable land, Nigeria still remains an importer instead of exporter of food products. A nation that fails to attain food sufficiency is food insecure and may not be capable of feeding itself in hard times of war and can easily be silenced by the threat of sanctions. In 2008, Nigeria produced 2million MT of milled rice and imported 3million MT which indicates that the country could only produce 40% of its domestic needs. This deficiency is believed to be caused by outdated land tenure system, inefficient and corrupt fertilizer procurement and distribution strategy, poor irrigation system, failure to innovate user friendly and cost effective farming tools and frequent post-harvest losses that distract willing farmers (FAO 2015). In terms of electricity generation, quite a number of Nigerians still live in darkness as electricity generation and distribution defies all reforms due mainly to corruption. After injecting 3.2 trillion naira into the electricity project, Nigeria with about 160 million people by 2013, could generate only 4000 megawatts of electricity (0.03 kilowatts per head) compared to South African 45,000 Megawatts (1.02 kilowatts per head) (Cheri & Ibrahim 2013). This invariably cripples the economy especially the manufacturing sector that survives on gas thereby incurring cost.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it can safely be concluded that Nigeria more than South Africa and all other contenders, possesses the advantage of numbers, diverse economic viability, relative military strength, influential cultural asset and international diplomatic recognition to lead the African continent and serve as a regional superpower capable of resolving conflicts, providing aids and rallying support for a common cause and forging alliances to solve African problems. However, Nigeria must address its domestic problems of insurgency, ethnic and religious clashes, corruption and infrastructural defects before it can meaningfully claim continental leadership. Nigeria has also been rated one of the most corrupt countries of the world by international agencies and the 2015 General Elections victory of Mohammed Buhari was on his take on Boko Haram, corruption and overhaul of economy. President of Nigeria, General Mohammed Buhari is committed to his election promises to wipe out the Boko Haram scourge and corruption from Nigeria. One can see so many positive changes and rebuilding of Nigeria's image under the committed leadership of President Buhari. The ongoing war on Boko Haram and its success will make a drastic impact on Nigerian economy and polity as well as regional and international peace.

Recommendations:

- i. Nigeria should emphasize in its subsequent Federal budgets the need to acquire modern military equipment such as submarines, Attack-Helicopters and Aircraft carriers to enhance Nigeria's military position.
- ii. National Orientation of citizens on the strength of the country and its ambitions should be embarked upon to mobilize the citizens to support their governments in achieving such onerous goal of becoming an undisputed continental superpower.
- iii. Diversification of the economy especially manufacturing, agriculture and mining sectors of the economy should be considered a major priority to reduce the country's dependence on oil and increase self-reliance on basic needs such as food, furniture and water.
- iv. A law should be enacted to ban or limit the importation of rice, fish, toothpick, and textiles in order to protect and motivate local producers of those goods thereby reducing the pressure on foreign currency exchange. 

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